

America Competes Act Passes House with Two Matsui Amendments

Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D–Sacramento) joined with her colleagues in supporting H.R. 5116, the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010, which passed the House by a vote of 262-150. The COMPETES Act will foster innovation and support research, better prepare the next generation of American innovators through increased education funding, and create American jobs. Two amendments offered by Representative Matsui, both ensuring that research and development programs are inclusive of smart grid technology, were adopted by the House during floor debate Friday.

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Congresswoman Matsui Fights to Advance American Innovation

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WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D–Sacramento) joined with her colleagues in supporting H.R. 5116, the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010, which passed the House by a vote of 262-150. The COMPETES Act will foster innovation and support research, better prepare the next generation of American innovators through increased education funding, and create American jobs. Two amendments offered by Representative Matsui, both ensuring that research and development programs are inclusive of smart grid technology, were adopted by the House during floor debate Friday.

“America has been at the root of the world’s technological and scientific advances for the past century and the Competes Act will continue our legacy for the next hundred years,” said Rep. Matsui. “With passage of the COMPETES Act, we are protecting America’s role as the world’s innovator and fighting for American jobs and manufacturing. Our nation’s economy has been driven by and grown under the spirit of innovation. By expanding educational programs in these fields, we can ensure our children will be properly prepared for the high paying and highly technical careers of the future.”

H.R. 5116 supports basic research, improves science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education, and fosters innovation. The legislation puts basic research programs—the Department of Energy Office of Science, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology labs—on a doubling path over ten years.

“Investing in research and STEM education will help our country take the lead in scientific, technological and economic advancement,” Rep. Matsui said on the House floor earlier this month, where she advocated for passage of the legislation. “This bill will also assist my home town of Sacramento, where we are positioned to become a leader in the clean technology sector.”

Congresswoman Matsui has continually worked with her colleagues and leaders in Sacramento to highlight the importance of STEM education for all children and recently hosted local events focused on increasing women in traditionally male-dominated careers such as engineering. The COMPETES Act also improves science and math education by reauthorizing programs that give teachers a deep understanding of their content, so they can help their students understand the real world applications of what they are learning. The bill also addresses coordination of STEM activities across the federal government, and improves STEM education at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral levels. Moreover, the bill aims to increase women and minorities in STEM fields by providing educational grants to all schools and prioritizing the inclusion of minority serving institutions, a goal that Rep. Matsui has been highlighting through her Women and Minorities in Engineering Events at Sacramento-area high schools over the last several months.

Additionally, this landmark bill helps foster innovation in new energy technologies by: reauthorizing the Advanced Research Projects Agency & Energy (ARPA-E), which is pursuing high-risk, high-reward energy technology development; and authorizing Energy Innovation Hubs, which are multidisciplinary collaborations with a single technological focus that currently presents a critical barrier to achieving our national energy innovation goals. With the creation of Regional Innovation Clusters and Energy Innovation Hubs, smaller collaborations will be able to model demonstrations before implementing them on a national scale.

The COMPETES Act also included two amendments offered by Representative Matsui, both supporting research and development of smart grid technology. Matsui's first amendment ensures that smart grid technology is an important part of the research collaboration between the Office of Science and Department of Energy as they work towards new energy technologies. Matsui's second amendment provides that Smart Grid technologies are included in the list of research, development, demonstration, and commercial application activities that may be undertaken by a DOE Energy Innovation Hub.

"More than half of the growth in our GDP since World War II can be attributed to development and adoption of new technologies," added Rep. Matsui. "The jobs of tomorrow will require a highly educated and well trained workforce. The America COMPETES Act will help to create jobs in Sacramento by investing in our students, teachers and workers."

The America COMPETES Act was endorsed by over 750 organizations including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, the American Association of Colleges and Universities, as well as local universities and organizations.

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